

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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SUBJECT: FERDINAND UNDER THE CORK TREE

REF: MANILA 12938

SUMMARY: MARCOS AND NATION CELEBRATED FORMER'S 58TH BIRTHDAY
YESTERDAY WITH PRESIDENT MAKING TRADITIONAL EXCURSION TO
RURAL AREA WHERE HE REITERATED NEED FOR CONTINUING CRISIS
GOVERNMENT AND ANNOUNCED LIBERAL POTPOURRI OF GRANTS, LOANS
AND OTHER GOODIES CALCULATED TO GRATIFY JUST ABOUT EVERYONE.
HOWEVER, AS IN SEPTEMBER 10 "LOYALTY DAY" SPEECH (REFTEL)
PRESIDENT FAILED TO ANNOUNCE ANY IMPORTANT CHANGES IN POLICY
OR GOVERNMENT/MILITARY STAFFING. HE MAY BE SAVING BIG
REVELATIONS FOR THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF MARTIAL LAW (SEPTEMBER 21)
AND THEN AGAIN, HE MAY NOT. END SUMMARY.

1. PRESIDENT MARCOS (AND NATION) CELEBRATED HIS 58TH BIRTHDAY
SEPTEMBER 11. AS HE HAS DONE IN PAST, CHIEF EXECUTIVE MADE
HEAVILY PUBLICIZED PILGRIMAGE TO COUNTRYSIDE, WHERE HE
REMOVED HIS SHIRT AND HARVESTED RICE WITH FAMILY OF MODEL
FARMER IN BULACAN PROVINCE. RESULT WAS SPATE OF FRONT-PAGE
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PHOTOS FEATURING PRESIDENT'S IMPRESSIVELY LEAN AND BEMUSCLED

TORSO, AS IF TO REASSURE THOSE WHO MAY WORRY ABOUT IMMINENT SUCCESSION THAT HE IS AT ANY RATE IN NO DANGER OF CORONARY.

2. FOLLOWING THIS DEMONSTRATION OF PHYSICAL FITNESS AND RURAL RAPPORT, PRESIDENT HELD CABINET MEETING UNDER SHADE OF MANGO TREE AND ISSUED CORNUCOPIA OF DECREES AND DIRECTIVES (SEE 3 BELOW). AS REPORTED BY MEDIA HE REITERATED NEED FOR CONTINUATION OF CRISIS GOVERNMENT "EVEN IN AREAS (OF PHILIPPINES) WHERE CONDITIONS HAVE BEEN STABILIZED," CITING THREAT WORLD ECONOMIC CRISIS, CONTINUING MINDANAO PROBLEM, AND HOST OF AS-YET-UNCOMPLETED NEW SOCIETY CHORES.

3. SOMETHING-FOR-EVERYONE SESSION WITH CABINET INCLUDED ANNOUNCEMENT OF AUTHORIZATIONS, LOANS, OR GRANTS FOR HAND TRACTORS, COLD STORAGE PLANTS FOR USE OF FISHERMAN, REHABILITATION CENTERS FOR MUSLIM RETURNEES, CREATION OF SEVERAL NEW RESETTLEMENT AREAS, CRACKDOWN ON HIGH-LIVING TEENAGE DROPOUTS, AND MUCH, MUCH MORE.

4. PRESIDENT ALSO ANNOUNCED CLEMENCY FOR 416 "CONVICTS" (PRESUMABLY CRIMINAL PRISONERS), WITH ONE PAPER (DAILY EXPRESS) ASSERTING THAT HE ALSO ANNOUNCED PENDING RELEASE OF "MORE POLITICAL PRISONERS." (COMMENT: WE THINK LATTER PROBABLY IN ERROR.)

5. PRESIDENT'S BIRTHDAY WAS ALSO MARKED BY CELEBRATION OF "BARANGAY DAY." GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES WERE GIVEN TIME OFF TO PARTICIPATE IN BEAUTIFICATION AND OTHER CIVIC PROGRAMS BY THESE BASIC VILLAGE UNITS OF NEW SOCIETY. ACROSS THE NATION BARANGAY LEADERS DEDICATED 130 NEW ROADS, 60 NEW BRIDGES, ETC., ETC., IN THE NAME OF THE PRESIDENT, WHILE IN METRO MANILA, GRATEFUL SUBJECTS LED BY MAYOR BAGATSING BLED FOR MARCOS (2,500 BOTTLES DONATED).

6. MEDIA FOLLOWED THROUGH WITH THE USUAL RAPT COVERAGE. "DAILY EXPRESS" PRAISED PRESIDENT FOR SETTING EXAMPLE OF OFFICIAL DIALOGUE WITH PEOPLE, NOTING THAT FOR PROCESS TO WORK IT MUST BE "TWO WAY" WITH CITIZENS NOT FAILING TO APPROACH AUTHORITIES WHEN MATTERS NEED CORRECTING.
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"EXPRESS" COMMENTARY SUGGESTED MORE CLEARLY THAN USUAL THAT THANKS TO OFFICIALS WHO FAIL TO FOLLOW THROUGH, PRESIDENT FACES DISTINCT CREDIBILITY PROBLEM.

7. INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT (AS REPORTED BY MEDIA) THIS SHOW WAS ALL FERDINAND'S, WITH NEITHER IMELDA NOR THE KIDS PUTTING IN AN APPEARANCE.

8. COMMENT: WHILE THE ATMOSPHERICS ON THIS OCCASION
WERE SOMEWHAT MORE IMAGINATIVE THAN USUAL, IT IS WORTH
NOTING THAT PRESIDENT ONCE AGAIN FAILED TO ANNOUNCE ANY
MAJOR SHIFTS IN POLICY OR PERSONNEL. RUMOR MILL
CONTINUES TO GRIND, ESPECIALLY WITH REGARD TO CHANGES
WITHIN MILITARY. THE NEXT POSSIBLE OCCASION WILL BE RITES
IN CELEBRATION OF THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF MARTIAL LAW.
TUNE IN AGAIN ON SEPTEMBER 21.
SULLIVAN

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